

VIRTUUE

detectives

looking for Christ in Lent



Summer Kinard

Wisdom

Christ crucified the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. I Corinthians 1: 22-25

Wisdom, also known as "prudence" in the language of virtues, means to weigh things with understanding, foresight, knowledge, and context. For us Christians, the ultimate context is the story of salvation that centers on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. St. James assures us that God freely gives wisdom to anyone who asks for it. In the Bible, Solomon is known for seeking wisdom above riches and worldly influence. Judges talks about the wisdom of Deborah and Gideon. The wise men sought baby Jesus.

- Did someone plan ahead?
- Did someone choose to do good?
- Did you set yourself up for hospitality, kindness, helpfulness, prayer, going to church?
- Did you pray about something first?
- Did someone have an insight that helped everyone in a situation?
- Was someone looking for Christ even though they had a challenge in front of them?
- Did you set aside a place in your home to remember God?
- Did you ask God to help you?

Spend time in nature. Watch birds. Look at the weather. Can you see the way things are connected? What do you notice about the world around you this week? Can you recall a Bible story about that part of nature? What about a hymn?

Justice

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness (justice) of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5: 20-21

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?" -Micah 6:8*

Justice means to give to each his or her due. It also means to act rightly according to the character of God in His covenants. When you see the term "righteous" or "righteousness," it is talking about someone who acts justly. Christian righteousness has the character of mercy and humility because it's the terms of our relationship with God, whose property is always to have mercy.

- Did someone act fairly?
- Did someone restore what was lost?
- Did someone treat a stranger the way that God would treat us?
- Did you set listen to each person's needs in your family?
- Did you ask God to help those who are helpless?
- Did you, or did you see someone, do what was right even when others would not notice?
- Did you see forgiveness?
- Did you remember that it is God who sorts out the hearts of humans?
- Did you seek God's kingdom first?
- Did you think about yourself and others as God's creatures and beloved children, rather than partisans, citizens, consumers, experiments, and other ways to think of distinctions in persons?

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, every worker got the same wage even though they worked different amounts. God's justice is always like that, merciful towards whoever comes to Him. The parable of the Pearl of Great Price was often interpreted so that humans are the pearl that God gives Himself to redeem, to raise human nature to what He intended. Have you thought of what it would mean to treat yourself and others with the dignity of those who bear God's image?

Fortitude

"And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." -2 Corinthians 12: 8-10

*"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love."
-1 Corinthians 16:13- 14*

Fortitude means bravery and firmness in seeking good and resisting evil. For Christians, fortitude is strengthened by Christ and entails good habits like sobriety, penitence, acting courageously, and fleeing from sins. It takes bravery to accept the mercy of God and to seek Him out even when we don't know what the outcome will be. Bravery for Christians is not primarily expressed through violence, but through love and faithfulness, like the bravery that led Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea to take Christ's body down from the Cross and the bravery with which the myrrhbearing women went to the tomb.

- Did someone stand up for those who are vulnerable?
- Did someone speak up for what is good rather than what is popular?
- Did you resist a bad habit?
- Did you reach out to someone to encourage them?
- Did you pray to God to give you strength?
- Did you bear a weakness or sickness without despair?
- Did you seek forgiveness?
- Did you tend to daily tasks while praying?
- Did you greet and end the day with prayer?
- Did you keep doing something right even when it wasn't convenient or easy?
- Did you show up for someone who needed your strength?

Fortitude is the moving strength behind disciplines like fasting (only with the counsel of the priest!), taking time to pray as soon as you stand up out of bed and right before you go to sleep, saving money that you would have spend on luxuries, studying, learning to tell your story of faith, and choosing to believe and trust in God. Fortitude is also what we use to practice good motivations. The Desert Fathers and Mothers in Egypt and Celtic Saints practiced praying while they wove or worked with their hands so that they could help the poor. Bravery, or fortitude is needed to face quiet, repetitive tasks as well as bold, dramatic ones!

Moderation

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." -2 Timothy 1:7

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;*

*In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths." -Proverbs 3:5-6*

Moderation, also known as temperance or self-control, is the virtue of only doing what is necessary. In Lent it can show up when we lower our outside commitments to focus on time in prayer and at home. It's a major virtue at play in disciplines of fasting as well, as we learn to eat until not hungry rather than until full. (When monks fast strictly, they also add more rest into their days so that their lower bodily energy can be directed towards prayer.) We see moderation in saints like Mother Maria of Paris who begged for food that she prepared for 120 people each day, and in John the Baptist, who rejoiced to eat locusts and wild honey and other foods that the Lord provided freely in the wilderness. It's also a shining virtue in St. Emmelia, who chose holiness over worldly power when she guided her children, and in St. Panteleimon, who healed with the power of Christ as well as through his steady and excellent practice of medicine. This virtue also repels condemnation of oneself and others, as love for Christ and trust in His judgment is truly necessary.

- Did you see someone choose to buy something less fancy or large than they could afford?
- Did you take a deep breath to calm yourself before you spoke?
- Did you prioritize praying?
- Did you stay in a budget?
- Did you choose a simpler option so you could spend time with your loved ones? Prayer?
- Did you save money by avoiding luxuries so you could share with people in need?
- Did you work steadily on a big project?
- Did you take time for quiet and speaking with people in person today?
- Did you limit your screen time in the evening so you can receive rest?
- Did you look for the virtues in the people around you?
- Did you set your thoughts on good, true, kind, lovely, holy, and worthy things?

God taught His people to trust Him through moderation during the 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. Taking only what you need for the day is also a part of the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) and the disciplines of fasting and almsgiving. Self-control extends from living simply to avoiding swearing, as Jesus advises us to let our yes be yes and our no be no. A long habit of moderation will help us find times of silence, too, as we recognize when words and external sounds are not necessary.

Faith

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."-Hebrews 11:1

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." -Romans 1:16-17

Faith is the virtue of trust and the recognition of God's presence with us and faithfulness to us. It is therefore trust, but also it's what allows us to know that we are in God, held by His love, drawn towards Him in every place and moment. When Jesus said, "You believe in God; believe also in me," He was showing that He is also God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and He was giving us the name to call upon in trust, so that we might be saved. The scriptures and saints lives are filled with examples of ways that people and God were faithful. Faith is what empowers our ability to discern the presence and works of God with us.

- Did you pay attention to the Gospel and Epistle during Mass?
- Did you pray the Psalms at home?
- Did you read some of the daily scriptures?
- Did you ask God to help you know Him?
- Did you pray with holy images this week?
- Did you practice your faith in holy works like prayer and mercy?
- Did you stay still or walk in a quiet place in silence for five minutes?
- Did you notice anyone praying?
- Did you notice any patterns this week that reminded you of scripture or Mass?
- Did you listen to the Psalter or hymns?
- Did you try praying while you knitted, crocheted, or did a repetitive household task like peeling potatoes or folding laundry?

We each trust God, but we keep the faith together. Even the great ascetics of the wildernesses encouraged one another with visits and common prayer. Scriptures are filled with people who sought Jesus above all else, pouring out their faith in gifts, justice, mercy, healings, food, songs, hospitality, and companionship. When you look for faith this week, seek to find it by acting on it.

Hope

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." -Isaiah 40-31

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." -Romans 5:1-5

Hope is the virtue of expecting to see God's face. It is the virtue that looks for God, and it is trained and energized by the Holy Spirit who calls out with our spirit, "Abba, Father!" to God. When we hope, we also approach every part of life, and especially one another, expecting to see God with us. Hope makes us look for the resurrection of the dead the way a bride looks out for her Bridegroom. Christ came to us, comes to us and always will, and we look for Him in hope.

- When you had to wait this week, did you ask God to show you how He is with you?
- Did you see a movie where someone was watching for someone else?
- Have you searched for anything or anyone this week?
- Did you set aside time to pray expecting that God would be with you?
- Did you notice anyone talk to God as though they knew He was with them?
- Did you say group prayers and Psalms to share the hope of others?
- Did you watch birds this week? Did they gather in hope?

The story of the prodigal son shows us the Father's hope that his son will return to him. When we think of hope, we should remember that father looking out for his son. We will always be welcome when we return to God, too. Hope also motivates us to search to know God and to seek His kingdom first. To every parable of the kingdom of God about us seeking God, there's one for God seeking us. Our hope is rooted in the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and is confirmed in the Holy Spirit who is with us.

Love

"Let all that you do, be done in love." - I Corinthians 16:14

"We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." I John 4:19-21

Where charity and love are, there is God. Love is the virtue that we share with God's own nature, and it is marked by humility, compassion, attention, and perseverance. It never fails. Like Jesus's beloved disciple John and His holy women disciples and His Mother, who stood in love even at the foot of the cross, love is not deterred by any hardship. Hope leads us to look out for God. Love shows us God when He appears. It is the sign of our faces sharing the light of God's face, in intimacy, care, profound acceptance, and purpose. We were made for the Love of God and one another. Thus the greatest commandment is that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind. From this flows the second, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

- Did you ask God to show you how He loves people when you prayed for them?
- Did you witness an act of caring for others?
- Have you thought of all of your strengths as ways to love God?
- Did you notice when you were using your mind, soul, heart, and strength for unloving actions? How did you feel compared to when you acted with them for love?
- Did you forgive and ask forgiveness?
- Did you see a need and help alleviate it out of love?
- Did you say thank you?
- Did you let someone else go first because you love them?

St. Paul writes about the ways that Love embodies all of the virtues and is the greatest of them. Love is a seeking in order to self-give. It is a sharing in the life of God, and we are energized by the Holy Spirit to love. Love motivates our telling of the Gospel, because it was God's love that sent His Son into the world that the world might be saved. God became human so that we might become like God, and this transformation is centered in love. In love we participate in God in the sacraments, prayers, and imitating Christ in all the virtues.